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Peter Kean to Susan Ursin Niemcewicz, December 28, 1808

Peter Philip James Kean

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Branford December 28th
1808.

My Dear Mother

I wrote that I intended setting out for this place immediately after resting a day in Charleston but an agreeable surprise prevented me from doing so; I had taken my seat in the stage & discharged my bill at the Tavern, when I was informed that a Mr Barnwell had gone to bed in my room. I went up stairs where I found my friend John B. fast asleep. I awoke him immediately & informed him of my intention he requested me to stay and accompany him in the boat which I promised to do, he was however so much crowded that I took the stage and after a very disagreeable ride of five days and a night arrived at this place on Saturday where I met with a most kind reception from Mr B. who desired me to stay so at his house while Mrs B. remained as well as she is at present adding that he could at any time take the liberty of desiring me to look for a bed elsewhere. Mr B. was quite surprised that you did not send me on in a chaise as it would be absolutely necessary for me to be master of a horse when I visited Georgia, where I shall have a dreary time in hunting for your lands, in order that some estimate may be formed of their value.

I received a kind note from Judge Grimké inviting me to dine with him the Saturday before I was to have left town a previous engagement prevented me from complying with his request and I thought it most advisable to answer the note in person. The Judge gave that kind of reception which while it adds to the respect youth feels towards a dignified old man kindles the most lively and confidential friendship. He told me that Mr Shubrick did not expect May did not

Did not even wish to recover any thing that he wished to obtain a
warrant against him in order to enable him to set a side an agreement
made between himself and ~~the~~ Dr. Shu: I mentioned to him the release
& the papers which I have with me, he thought that it was probable
Mr. S. on seeing them would give a discharge & advised me to
request you to forward as soon as possible notarial copies
of the releases you have in your possession. Mr Barnwell
on inspecting the ~~above~~ statement thinks I stand on much higher
ground than he before supposed, & wishes also to see the releases when
they arrive he says he will be able to form some definite idea respecting
some questions I must ask Judge Grim: if he will give his opinion
of not Gen Reid. when I go up to Charleston again. Mr B. however
thinks that there will be a small balance against me
which it will be better to settle without the expense of a law
suit, how this is to be effected reflects on and on sight of the
releases and an attentive examination of the statement
will point out. As there are not notaries in person the best way
will be to send copies certified by the mayor of E. T. on this
head you had better however consult Mr C. Chetwood or
Col Ogden.

Mr Barnwell's advice respecting the lands
in this country is that I should ascertain as nearly as possible what
they were reasonably worth before the embargo. & if I ~~should~~ ^{should} meet with a purchaser
not to sell if not to let them lay idle for some years. If I should not want
to make use of capital he thinks a sale might be effected by giving
very long credit and securing the interest to be paid annually
taking a mortgage on the property on this subject I should be glad to
have your advice. The house in Beaufort is in a very ruinous
situation the stable not rebuilt. John B. thinks it would be worth \$500
if in complete order & things again restored to order. There are also
two other lots in Beaufort which are thus situated they were the
property of a man ~~whose~~ who owed my father money he obtained
a writ of attachment against it which was put into the
hands of Capt Grayson the then sheriff with directions to sell
it and to purchase in for my father. Grayson never did
so, & the property passed into the hands of my father without
a sale Mr B. has returned it as part of the estate & paid taxes for
it, the title however is by no means a good one. The circumstance
is not known and I may sell them making the possession
of the purchaser my possession and thus waive the title

The scarcity of money in this country is inconceivably great
and I much fear that I shall find it difficult to obtain.
Mr B. had written to his factor ~~not~~ to pay \$500 dollars of the
remittance he made you (but his letter arrived too late & the
draft had been already forwarded. if you have not already
written that sum off your bonds you may if you please
forward me bills for \$500 for which I can give my receipt
to Mr B. considering it as part of the money he
owes me, this arrangement will be very agreeable to
him as he is much distressed to raise money & I
am at present entirely destitute of funds. You do me the
honor to ask my opinion in your three last letters one
of which I received yesterday respecting the disposition of money.
if you conscientiously think that there is anything due to
~~the estate~~ Phillip Livingston the better way would be to
pay it. but if you are perfectly confident that you can
remember the conversation you mentioned to me before
I left you there can not be a possibility of his recovering one cent.
There are now only two ways of laying out money to advantage
at the same time securing yourself an income, stock and bonds
with good mortgages if bank stock should have fallen in consequence
of the present situation of our affairs ~~would advise you by all means~~
to lay out a part of the money you receive in that way if in
securely bonds at 4 per cent well secured are the best. I should not
be surprised if Gov. were not able to pay off the 8 per cent stock as
I know not whence money is to be derived to support the
expenses of the army or the without they intend to effect some
new loans if so would it not be a good thing to lend them
some money. you upbraided me about not informing you of
the non intervention act when I do not know that it has as yet
passed & I could not possibly divine that it would be thought
off. I heard the report of the committee & that report must
have been known to every Democratic merchant in N.Y.
before my letter could have been received by you.
I have not heard from Albany but through my dear parent
since I left Baltimore this gives me as little uneasiness I assure
you, as it leads me to fear that M. Jags eyes are worse.
My love to Mrs Williams and all enquiring friends
& believe ~~me~~ that my thoughts are with you
yours with duty &
affection Peter Schan

The mail leaves this but once a week so that I can not write you as often as you might wish if my time would permit, but really I do not possess the art of writing about nothings, and my mind dwells on one or two objects so much at present that I find it often difficult to keep my attention alive. John B. and his wife are now with Mrs Bull they are going out to the retreat soon and I expect to follow them when John has promised to accompany me to visit Paris island and the plantation on the creek. I shall probably not go to Georgia before two weeks. Mrs Gough I have not yet seen since my Christmas dinner at Mrs Bulls & dined on Monday with Dr Campbell I dine tomorrow with Mrs Mims John Barwells brother in law. The whole of the family receive me as if I were one of them and John treats me like a younger brother. I think it probable that I shall make his house my home during the greater part of my stay in Carolina. young Edward who has just married has also made me promise to spend some day with him.

Dated Dec 9 1808.
Beaufort S.C.
Jan 1809.

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Dec 28th 1808

Algth Town

New Jersey

Mrs. Hemmings

Ches

8-21
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Mrs Barwell appears at times quite rational she is subject however to bursts of madness which are at times so violent that Mr B. is obliged to remove her to a room with iron gratings. He poor man bears up against his misfortunes and is truly the emblem of a great man struggling amidst the storms of fate he looks better than he did when to the northward & is constantly cheerful - adieu yours with sincere affection
Peter

P.S. Mr B is to send a servant with me to Georgia.